

News
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From Page:
21
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Should Medicare bargain for drug prices?

AARP members from across South Carolina are urging United States Senators Jim DeMint and Lindsey Graham to support legislation that would allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to bargain for lower Medicare drug prices. Earlier this year, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4, the "Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007" by a bipartisan vote of 255 - 170. AARP strongly supported H.R. 4 and is now putting its weight behind passing similar legislation in the Senate.

There is overwhelming support by residents in South Carolina to allow Medicare to bargain for lower drug prices. According to an AARP poll, 89 percent of residents want Medicare to use its enormous bargaining power to negotiate lower prices for prescription drugs.

Millions of older Americans now have access to needed medications and are realizing significant savings because of the new Medicare drug benefit. Requiring the secretary to use the bargaining power of 43 million Medicare beneficiaries to negotiate with the drug companies to help achieve even lower drug prices would

strengthen the Medicare drug benefit.

Older Americans are the largest consumers of prescription drugs, with a typical senior taking four prescriptions daily. "Drug prices are still too high," said Charles A. Johnson, AARP South Carolina state president. "These high prices hit our wallets hard."

"Over time, escalating drug prices could erode savings and make the Medicare drug plans more expensive for people," said Jane Wiley, AARP South Carolina state director.

"Our polls show that South Carolina residents support giving

Medicare the power to bargain for lower drug prices and we urge Senators DeMint and Graham to help make this happen."

AARP is tracking key votes in the 110th Congress and reporting back to its 38 million members how Congress votes on legislation its members are interested in, like health care.

Giving Medicare bargaining power is a key issue for our members, and we will be letting them know where their elected officials stand on this issue. "Our members want AARP to represent their concerns in Washington, and are

looking to us to keep them informed about how Congress responds to our efforts," said Wiley.

"This impacts my pocketbook," said Johnson. "We need to use every tool possible to keep drug prices down. We urge our Senators to support legislation to allow Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices."

A total of 1,007 adults ages 18+ responded to the national poll and 500 responded to each state poll. In all, 7,965 adults were polled. The national poll has a sampling error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points and each state poll has a sampling error of plus or minus 4.4 percentage points.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

